/98 cont./

587 [589] [836] [765] A widow has freedom of sexual intercourse. There is no definite period of mourning for her deceased husband and she may remarry at any time, except that she must have the approval of the brothers of the deceased husband. If either the elder or the younger brother of the deceased wishes to marry the widowed sister-in-law, then she may not marry an outsider. Otherwise she returns to her family to marry again. At the time of the second marriage a sorcerer priest is also asked to perform the ritual. There is no go-between nor a formally set date. At the wedding the "shame-covering parasol" must be opened fully. On reaching her new husband's home she enters by the front entrance. /99/ A widow may marry again and again. Furthermore, she can have a husband marry into her household.

(3) Birth

842 [782] 843 844 Despite the hard life of the Miao, the desire for sons is very strong with both rich and poor. When a Miao man has no son at middle age he must pray to the gods and make a vow, for the early birth of a son. A pregnant Miao woman keeps on working. At the time of delivery, they use a bamboo sifter placed on the ground, lined with cotton wadding on which is placed a layer of ragged garments. The woman stands with her legs apart, the body slightly bending, her two hands gripping the side of a bed or a bench. If she happens to be working on a mountainside and does not have time to get back home, then she chooses a place under the shade of a tree where she can easily get a grip. If the newborn child does not cry, she digs [825] out a blood clot from its mouth, or sometimes she keeps a cat ready on the side, and hits it to make it meow so as to startle the infant awake. 845 In case of complicated childbirth, an experienced old woman in the village is asked to help extract the child with the hands. Should an infant die in the womb, it is taken out with a hook, or sometimes a sorcerer priest is

/156 cont./

(14) Welcoming the Dragon

*782 [556] To seek the prosperity of family finances and status, the Miao make a vow to "welcome the dragon," called [qi zong] in their language. The time is any time between the ninth and the eleventh months. After the date has been selected, they start the dragon celebration about a month or half a month prior to that date. This is done by the villagers going to the host's house at night beating drums and gongs, blowing trumpets and whistling and shouting, and making a lot of noise until late at night. A few days before "Welcoming the Dragon," messengers must be [203] [602] sent to the family of the wife of the mother's brother/chiu-mu; is this an inversion of mu-chiu, "mother's brother"?/ to convey the tidings. The host personally goes to engage the services of two Miao sorcerers. The relatives /of the same clan/ in the village are also asked to come to help. For this affair they prepare three kinds of mi-pa, the thunder pa, the dragon pa, and the guest pa, and in addition, a rice dragon must be made. The thunder pa is divided into /Illus. 67 appears between pp. 156-57/ /157/ seven piles, each pile being made up of three pa, large, medium size, and small, one on top of the other. They are placed on a table outside the door. Five piles of dragon pa are placed on a table inside the main house. On the dragon pa is placed a rice dragon, on whose body are stuck three peaches made of mi-pa. On the right day Welcoming the Dragon starts after midnight. Early next morning, the host gets ready a tea tray, on which are placed two bowls of wine and two envelopes. He leads the villagers, beating drums and gongs, to the main road to welcome the maternal uncle /mu-chiu/. The host bows three times to the maternal uncle, who takes two bowls of wine from the tea tray and drinks it up, and then with the welcomers goes to the host's house. After the noon meal, the daughters-in-law of the host and the maternal uncle go together to "welcome the dragon." The mistress of the house wears a silver headdress [292] [493] [843] (Illus. 67) and an embroidered garment and skirt, and rides in a sedan chair. The maternal uncle wears a piece of black gauze on

/157 cont./

*782 his head and a long robe, and rides a horse. The women accom-
[292] panying him must be gaily dressed, and no pregnant woman is
[843] allowed to go along. The men assisting beat drums and blow musical instruments and set off firecrackers. Led by a sorcerer-priest the procession stops at the intersection of three crossroads about three or four li from the village. The sorcerer-priest then shouts for the dragon, whereupon music and firecrackers once more make a great din, and the procession turns back. When they arrive outside the village, the host and the male members of the family, each carrying incense and paper, are led from the house by another sorcerer-priest to greet them. After the welcome the two sorcerers enter in a dialogue. The male members of the host's family and the maternal uncle salute each other three times. The sorcerer-priests
[788] ring hand bells and lead the people into the house, and drums and music and firecrackers burst out in a great din. The maternal uncle and the other relatives return to their respective homes. After that a small hole is dug in the ground in the main house, in which is put a bowl of cinnabar water, which is covered by a stone slab. Upon the slab is a large rock, shaped like an egg. This is called the "dragon chamber." The sorcerer-priest rings the hand bell and utters an incantation, and the members of the host's family, men and women, go around the small hole three times, while music and firecrackers rend the air, after which the hole is filled with earth, with only the top of the dragon chamber exposed as a distinguishing mark.

(15) Warming the Ox Muzzle

*782 Warming the Ox Muzzle is also called "Sacrifice to the
777 Black Emperor Earth Lord," in the Miao language [ɹiɤ˧ ɕioˬ baˬ
731 loŋ˧ ɲieˬ]. When the Miao meet with disaster or financial loss,
[774] they sacrifice to this kuei. The names of the kuei are [mpʻɑ˧ tʂuˬ lioˬ tʂɤ˧] and [ɲiˬ tsuˬ lioˬ ntʂʻiˬ]. The time of this ceremony is during the day and the place is by the side of the left pillar of the main house. A table is placed next to the pillar, On it are laid 12 bowls of wine, 12 bowls of meat, and one bowl

[7 cont.]

844 4) Childbirth. The Miao-I people are physically very sturdy: their ability to procreate and their capacity for farm work are both great. The women too have to attend to house chores, being especially strong and fit, they regard childbirth as a common occurrence. When a married woman is pregnant [843] she has to be confined in her husband's house. At the time of childbirth she is attended by her mother-in-law or sister-in-law or sometimes she is just by herself. The umbilical cord is broken by means of a piece of stone, and the sac is placed in an earthen jar and buried underground or hung up high in the room. The baby is then washed with cold water. The mother 846 remains at home for a week, after which she goes up the hill to gather firewood or down the field to cultivate the land without further inhibition or recuperation. They are afraid to have 847 too many children and often get rid of them by drowning or simply killing them. It is said that when children are numerous there will be disputes over inheritance and litigations. [8] Moreover, if the parents have no property, the acquisition of many children means so much hard work to bring them up. So whether there is money or not in the family, to have children means added suffering and privation to the parents, who are therefore reluctant to have too many. Because of the prevalence [165] of infanticide the rate of childbirth is decreasing. This and the high mortality rate combine to endanger the growth of their population.

164 5) Disease. Due to the difficulties of livelihood the Miao-I cannot afford the facilities of health and sanitation. Their hardihood enables them to survive the cold seasons of winter and spring when little disease prevails. But summer and autumn are the seasons of ill health. In case of sickness there are no medical facilities in the Miao-I areas, and the patient is left to the mercy of nature or magic. Sometimes a mi-la [diviner] 755 or a kuei-shih [shaman priest] is asked to propitiate the ghost. Mi-la is also known as "mi-p'o," and kuei-shih as "tuan-kung." The patient's family first asks the diviner to ascertain the kind of evil spirit that is causing the trouble and the kind of animal most appropriate for sacrifice. Then the wizard priest is asked